

# Planning Applications Committee

26 June 2024



# Reading

Borough Council

Working better with you

<b>Title</b>	<b>PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT</b>
<b>Ward</b>	Abbey
<b>Planning Application Reference:</b>	210639
<b>Site Address:</b>	Eaton Court, 112 Oxford Road, Reading, RG1 7LL
<b>Proposed Development</b>	Demolition and residential redevelopment to provide three buildings comprising 120 residential units (Use Class C3), along with car parking, cycle parking, servicing bay and associated landscaping, amenity space, plant and refuse areas, and access arrangements.
<b>Applicant</b>	Venta Propco 1 Limited
<b>Report author</b>	Tom Bradfield
<b>Recommendations</b>	Delegate to the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services (ADTPPS) to i) GRANT full planning permission, subject to the satisfactory completion of a s106 legal agreement and delegate to ADTPPS to make such minor changes to the conditions, Heads of Terms and details of the legal agreement as may be reasonably required to issue the permission or ii) Refuse full planning permission if the legal agreement is not completed by 26/09/2024 (unless officers on behalf of the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement).
<b>S106 Terms</b>	<p>To secure affordable housing on site consisting of twelve units (10% provision) on site, to be 6 one bedroom units, 5 two bedroom units and 1 three bedroom unit. These to be capped at LHA levels (inclusive of service charges). Criteria for letting and income threshold requirements will be required to be confirmed as part of the legal agreement.</p> <p>An affordable housing Deferred Payment Mechanism to ensure that the maximum viable contribution is provided in accordance with Local Plan Policy H3, to be secured in accordance with the Affordable Housing SPD 2021. This to secure a review following substantial completion of the 90<sup>th</sup> unit, with payment being made in full prior to occupation of the 100<sup>th</sup> dwelling</p> <p>These contributions sought in accordance with Policy H3 and the adopted Affordable Housing SPD</p> <p>Zero carbon offset financial contribution of £55,440 payable on implementation of the development, in accordance with policy H5 and the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD</p> <p>Employment, Skills and Training and Construction financial contribution of £26,007.50 payable on implementation of the</p>

	<p>development calculated in accordance with the Employment Skills and Training SPD and to comply with Policy CC9.</p> <p>Off site public realm improvement contribution – to secure tree planting and public realm improvements along the Oxford Road frontage. Total sum to be £10,000 to be paid prior to occupation of the scheme, in accordance with policies CC9 and EN14.</p> <p>Highways improvements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Car club – to provide access to an accredited car club and membership to every residential unit on site prior to occupation of the proposed units</li> <li>• An annual review to establish whether an additional on-street bay for a car club in the vicinity would be required and to fund this if needed</li> <li>• Contribution of £7,500 towards Traffic Regulation Order to provide the car club bay and on street parking restrictions (as necessary) to be paid prior to occupation of the proposed units</li> <li>• S38 agreement to secure pedestrian/cycle links to the west of the site prior to occupation of the proposed units</li> <li>• S278 agreement to provide the car club bay on Eaton Place, to be secured prior to occupation of the proposed units.</li> </ul> <p>All financial contributions index-linked from the date of permission.</p>
<p><b>Conditions</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. TL1 - Full - time limit - three years</li> <li>2. Approved Plans</li> <li>3. Materials (samples to be approved)</li> <li>4. Cycle Parking (To be approved)</li> <li>5. Waste and Recycling (To be approved)</li> <li>6. Delivery and Servicing (To be approved)</li> <li>7. Parking Permits 1 (notification to LPA)</li> <li>8. Parking Permits 2 (notification to occupants)</li> <li>9. Construction Method Statement (pre-commencement)</li> <li>10. Vehicle Parking (As specified)</li> <li>11. Vehicular Access (As specified)</li> <li>12. Access Closure (with reinstatement)</li> <li>13. EV Charging Points</li> <li>14. Noise Mitigation Scheme (to be submitted)</li> <li>15. Mechanical Plant (Noise Assessment required)</li> <li>16. Hours of construction/demolition (standard)</li> <li>17. Hours of Deliveries/Waste Collection</li> <li>18. Ventilation and Extraction (to be submitted)</li> <li>19. No Bonfires</li> <li>20. Contaminated Land Assessment (To be submitted)</li> <li>21. Contaminated Land Remediation Scheme (to be submitted)</li> <li>22. Contaminated Land Remediation Scheme (implement and verification)</li> <li>23. Unidentified Contamination</li> <li>24. Archaeological Investigation (pre-commencement)</li> <li>25. Biodiversity Enhancements</li> <li>26. Bat Licences</li> <li>27. Compliance with Arboricultural Report</li> <li>28. Green Roofs</li> <li>29. Foul Water (Thames Water)</li> <li>30. Water Network Upgrades (Thames Water)</li> <li>31. Sustainable Drainage (pre-commencement)</li> <li>32. Sustainable Drainage (as specified)</li> </ol>

	<p>33. Submission and approval of hard and soft landscaping (pre-commencement)</p> <p>34. SAP Assessment – Major - design stage</p> <p>35. SAP Assessment – Major – As Built</p>
<b>Informatives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive and Proactive</li> <li>• Pre-commencement conditions</li> <li>• Highways</li> <li>• S106</li> <li>• Terms and Conditions</li> <li>• Building Regulations</li> <li>• Complaints about construction</li> <li>• Encroachment</li> <li>• Contaminated land</li> <li>• Tree related subsidence</li> <li>• CIL</li> <li>• Parking Permits</li> <li>• Thames Water (Water Mains)</li> <li>• Thames Water (Underground Water Assets)</li> </ul>

## 1. Executive summary

- 1.1. The proposal is recommended for approval subject to a legal agreement and conditions as set out above.
- 1.2. The proposal would successfully redevelop an important element of an allocated Local Plan site which is currently vacant. It would provide significant levels of housing, redevelopment benefits including a high quality design and significant public realm benefits, as well as ensuring future development elsewhere on the allocated site can come forward. The proposals would result in some harm to heritage assets, at a low to moderate level of less than substantial harm, would not meet policy requirements on Affordable Housing provision or unit mix, although these have been justified through viability information, and would include some substandard units in terms of privacy. Overall, it is considered that the significant benefits of the scheme would outweigh the harm identified. The application is therefore recommended to Planning Applications Committee for approval, subject to conditions and a legal agreement.

## 2. Introduction and Site Description

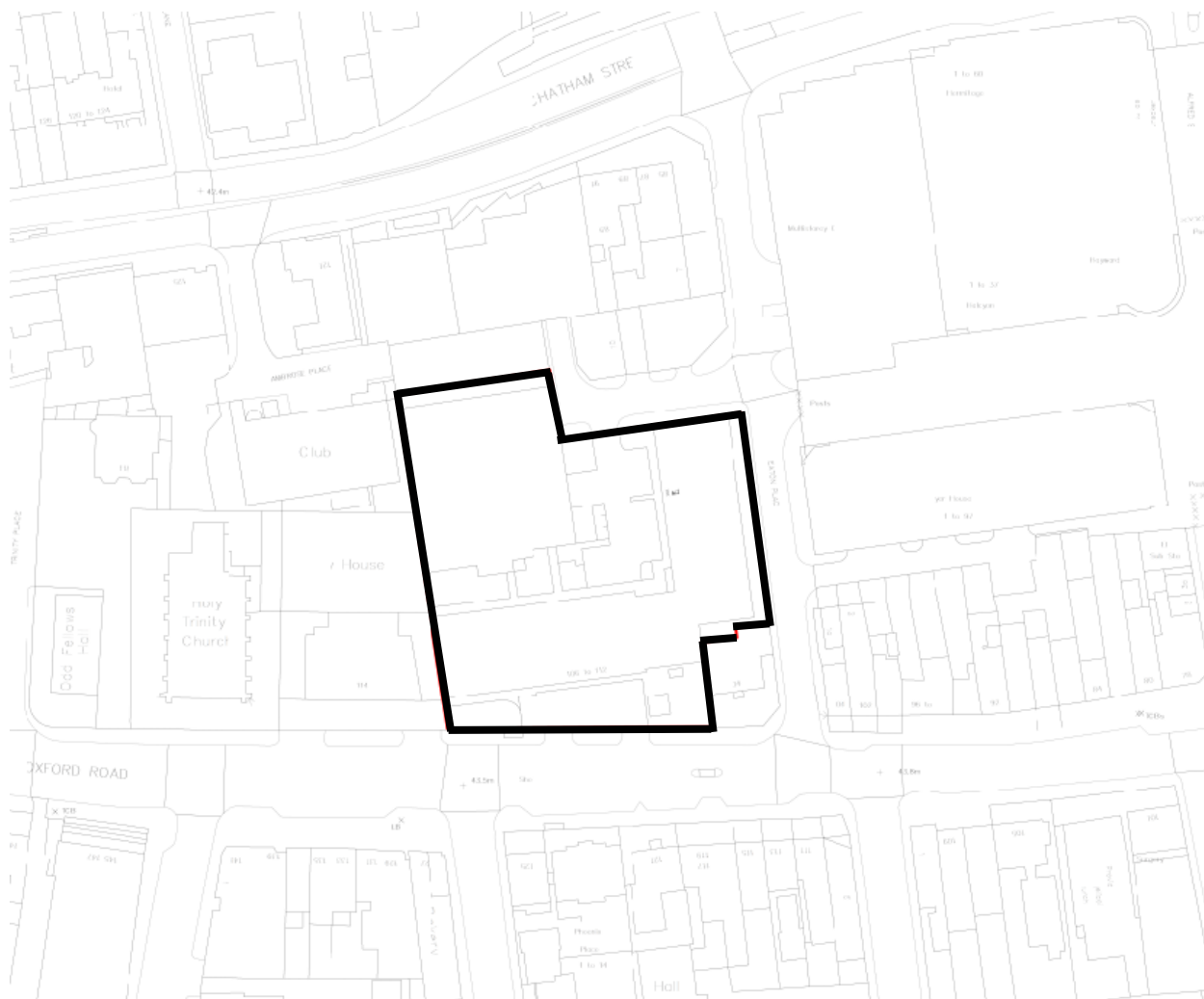
- 2.1. This application was originally submitted in 2021. Following a change in site ownership, an amended scheme was submitted in March 2023. Since then, officers have worked with the applicant to secure a number of amendments to the proposals, as well as negotiating the affordable housing offer. The application is now in a position for it to be reported to Planning Applications Committee.
- 2.2. The site is on the northern side of Oxford Road, adjacent to the corner with Eaton Place. The site wraps around the Royal Meteorological Society (RMS) building, which sits directly on the corner of Oxford Road and Eaton Place and is Grade II Listed. The site is not within a Conservation Area, however, the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area covers the Royal Meteorological Society (RMS) and properties on the northern side of Oxford Road to the east of the site, everything opposite the site on the southern side of Oxford Road and the Holy Trinity Church to the west.
- 2.3. The current building on site consists of a part two, part three storey office building and 106 space car park and is accessed by vehicles via Eaton Place to the rear of the site. There is a pedestrian entrance onto Oxford Road, as well as a visitor's car park accessed directly from Oxford Road.

- 2.4. To the north is Eaton Place, with a small vacant site at number 10 Eaton Place (which has recently been the subject of a refused planning permission ref. 201104), with the listed Butler public house beyond. To the east is Eaton Place, with terraced properties fronting Oxford Road and the Chatham Street development beyond. To the south is Oxford Road itself, which is characterised by a variety of commercial and residential uses and varied building heights and styles. To the west is a recently completed block of flats known as Bond House which faces onto Oxford Road and the Face Bar music venue and night club. Beyond this is the Listed Holy Trinity Church.
- 2.5. The site is within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), the Reading Central Area and the West Side Major Opportunity Area.
- 2.6. The site forms a large part of the Local Plan allocation CR12c, and so would be expected to bring forward the majority of potential dwellings as part of this allocation. CR12c states the following:

**CR12c, CHATHAM STREET, EATON PLACE AND OXFORD ROAD:**  
*Development of this area will be primarily for residential, with potential for community uses. There may also be some small scale retail and leisure uses on the Oxford Road frontage. This area is surrounded by heritage assets or low-rise residential, and inappropriate building scale at the fringes of the site will not be permitted. There is an opportunity to enhance the Oxford Road frontage, including with tree planting.*

**Site size: 1.15 ha      Indicative potential: 180-260 dwellings.**

- 2.7. The site location plan is below:



- 2.8. The site has been through the pre-application process, but the ownership of the site has changed, and the scheme is significantly different since pre-app was undertaken. During the course of this application, multiple rounds of amendments have been requested and received, comprising design and layout changes, alterations to the unit mix and affordable housing provision.
- 2.9. The site has the following planning history:

190291	Certificate of Lawfulness for Continuous Use of the Site as B1(a) Office Accommodation for 10 Years or More.
	Approved 16/04/2019
190419	Change of use from Class B1(a) (offices) to C3 (dwelling houses) to comprise 58 Units. Prior Notification under Class O, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015.
	Approved 14/05/2019 (Not implemented and now lapsed)

### 3. The proposal

- 3.1. This planning application was originally submitted in 2021. There were extensive discussions and amendments to the original scheme, and the site is under new ownership. In March 2023, a significantly amended scheme was submitted, alongside a full suite of new documents. Further amendments were received in May 2024, making changes to the design of the scheme, in particular on the south and east elevations, amending the balustrades, layout of Building 3, changes to the reception area and landscaping onto Oxford Road and alterations to the unit mix and affordable housing offer.
- 3.2. The proposal seeks to demolish the existing buildings on site and replace them with three buildings comprising 120 Build to Rent dwellings, associated car parking, cycle parking, servicing, landscaping amenity space, plant and refuse areas. 10% of the units would be provided as affordable housing, equating to 12 units on site with the following mix; 5 one bedroom units, 6 two bedroom units and 1 three bedroom unit.
- 3.3. The proposal is split into three main elements, the building facing Oxford Road (Building 1), the building facing Eaton Place (Building 2) and the building in the north western corner of the site (Building 3).
- 3.4. Building 1 would face south onto Oxford Road and would be four and five storeys in height, with the taller element in the centre, set away from the two neighbouring buildings. It includes a cut-out section adjacent to 104 Oxford Road (the RMS building), creating a small square in front of the main pedestrian entrance to the reception and communal areas of the site.
- 3.5. Building 2 sits directly behind 104 Oxford Road and is attached to Building 1. It starts at three storeys adjacent to 104 Oxford Road, and steps up in height as it gets further from the Listed Building, to a maximum of six storeys at the rear (north) of the site.
- 3.6. Building 3 is in the northwestern corner of the site and would be seven storeys in height. Between the three buildings would be a landscaped courtyard.
- 3.7. The proposal would include fourteen car parking spaces. Eight of the spaces would be allocated to the RMS, as they have a legal right to car parking provision on the application site. The remaining 6 being disabled access spaces for the residential use. The existing visitor's car park on the Oxford Road frontage would be removed.
- 3.8. The proposed residential unit mix would be as follows:

Type	Market	Affordable	Total
Studio flat	10	0	10 (8%)
1 bedroom flat	49	5	54 (45%)
2 bedroom flat	44	6	50 (42%)
3 bedroom flat	5	1	6 (5%)
<b>Total</b>	108	12	120 (100%)

3.9. The applicant has submitted the following documents for consideration:

- Affordable Housing Statement
- Air Quality Assessment
- Archaeological Assessment
- Contaminated Land Statement
- Ecology Statement (incl. Bat Survey and Roost Assessment)
- Biodiversity Enhancement Scheme
- Utilities Report
- Fire Statement
- Construction Management Plan
- Travel Plan and Transport Assessment
- Arboricultural Report
- Statement of Community Involvement
- Land Contamination Report
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Landscape Management and Specification Plans
- Noise Assessment
- Energy Statement
- Heritage Statement
- Planning Statement
- Daylight/Sunlight Assessment
- Viability Report
- Design & Access Statement
- Existing Plans and Elevations
- Proposed Plans and Elevations

#### 4. Consultations

4.1. There have been several rounds of consultation given the multiple iterations of the proposals. The most recent consultation was undertaken in March 2023. Additional internal consultee comments have also been provided where relevant following amendments. An additional full round of public consultation was not considered necessary following receipt of amendments as the amended scheme was not significantly different to the scheme originally consulted upon.

##### ***Thames Water***

4.2. Thames Water raised no objections subject to several conditions and informatives.

##### ***RBC Transport***

4.3. The transport team raised no objection to the proposals, but had the following comments:

- Some footways would need to be adopted by the Local Authority as highway land.

- The parking provision is below RBC's required standards, but due to the extensive parking restrictions in the area, accessibility of the site and willingness of the applicant to enter into a permit-free agreement, this is considered acceptable.
- Appropriate levels of cycle parking are being proposed.
- Servicing and waste collections would be from Eaton Place, which is considered acceptable.
- A car club bay is being proposed, subject to demand. This should be secured through a legal agreement
- A Construction Method Statement will be required.
- Various conditions proposed.

### ***RBC Housing Development***

- 4.4. The Housing team welcome the offer of affordable housing, although the amount is below policy requirements, the mix as reflective of the scheme as a whole. The units proposed are capped at the LHA rate and should include service charges, which is acceptable. The criteria for letting and income threshold requirements will be required to be agreed prior to completion of the legal agreement.

### ***RBC Valuations***

- 4.5. The applicant has demonstrated that the proposal is unviable without any affordable housing contribution. The proposed offer is therefore above what would be viable on site.

### ***RBC Conservation Officer***

- 4.6. The proposal would result in less than substantial harm at a low level to the setting of Grade II Listed Royal Meteorological Society building, Church of the Holy Trinity and the Conservation Area due to the introduction of this level of development. The design of the proposed buildings on Oxford Road would reflect the neighbouring buildings well.
- 4.7. The proposal would be larger towards the rear of the site, and so would have a less than substantial impact on the setting of the Grade II Listed Butler Wine Vaults at a moderate level. This harm would arise due to the scale of the proposed development on this northern edge of the site, combined with the cumulative impact of other recent development.

### ***RBC Waste & Recycling***

- 4.8. Further information was requested relating to the collection of waste and recycling, which was provided. Waste management would be secured by suggested condition.

### ***RBC Environmental Protection***

- 4.9. Additional information relating to noise and air pollution was required and has been provided. A variety of conditions relating to noise, air quality, land contamination, bin storage, hours of construction and a CMS were suggested.

### ***RBC Planning (Natural Environment) Team***

- 4.10. Additional information relating to landscaping, tree provision and protection, the landscaping management plan and SUDS was requested and provided. No objections subject to conditions.

### ***RBC Ecology***

- 4.11. The proposals would have no impact on protected species or priority habitats, therefore no objection to the proposals. Conditions relating to landscaping and biodiversity enhancements were suggested.

### ***Berkshire Archaeology***

- 4.12. No objection subject to condition relating to archaeological investigations.

### ***Daylight/Sunlight***

- 4.13. The applicants submitted a Daylight/Sunlight assessment which required additional review by an external consultant on behalf of the local planning authority. They found that overall, the proposal would leave neighbouring properties with appropriate natural light conditions. Furthermore, for future occupiers, whilst a limited number of rooms would suffer from poor amenity, the overall level of compliance would meet the local and national policy and guidance.

### ***Resident Groups***

- 4.14. The Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) objects to the application as follows:
- The proposal would fail to protect or enhance the Grade II Listed Building at 104 Oxford Road.
  - The development would have a negative impact on the Russell Street/Castle Hill/Oxford Road Conservation Area.

### ***Public/local consultation and comments received***

- 4.15. 197 neighbouring properties were consulted by letter and three site notices were displayed at the application site.
- 4.16. Twenty three letters of objection were received throughout the lifetime of the application, raising the below issues:
- Impact on heritage assets is unacceptable
  - Impact on the street scene is unacceptable
  - Unacceptable design
  - Impact on neighbour's living conditions
  - Lack of infrastructure to support new units
  - Lack of car parking
  - Loss of trees/impact on trees

## **5. Legal context**

- 5.1. Section 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.
- 5.2. Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority in the exercise of its functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.
- 5.3. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).
- 5.4. In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan 2019 according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

- 5.5. Accordingly, the latest NPPF and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

**National Policy – National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023**

Section 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development  
Section 4 – Decision Making  
Section 5 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes  
Section 6 – Building a strong, competitive economy  
Section 7 – Ensuring the vitality of town centres  
Section 8 - Promoting healthy and safe communities  
Section 9 - Promoting sustainable transport  
Section 11 – Making Effective Use of Land  
Section 12 - Achieving well-designed places  
Section 14 - Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change  
Section 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment  
Section 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

**Reading Borough Local Plan 2019**

Policies:

CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development  
CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction  
CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change  
CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage  
CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development  
CC7: Design and the Public Realm  
CC8: Safeguarding Amenity  
EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment  
EN2: Areas of Archaeological Significance  
EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas  
EN5: Protection of Significant Views with Heritage Interest  
EN6: New Development in a Historic Context  
EN7: Local Green Space and Public Open Space  
EN9: Provision of Open Space  
EN10: Access to Open Space  
EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network  
EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland  
EN15: Air Quality  
EN16: Pollution and Water Resources  
EN17: Noise Generating Equipment  
EN18: Flooding and Drainage  
H1: Provision of Housing  
H2: Density and Mix  
H3: Affordable Housing  
H4: Build to Rent Schemes  
H5: Standards for New Housing  
H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space  
TR1 Achieving the Transport Strategy  
TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters  
TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging  
CR1: Definition of Central Reading  
CR2: Design in Central Reading  
CR3: Public Realm in Central Reading  
CR6: Living in Central Reading  
CR12: West Side Major Opportunity Area

Supplementary Planning Documents

Affordable Housing (2021)  
Planning Obligations under S106 (April 2015)  
Sustainable Design and Construction (Dec 2019)  
Employment, Skills and Training (2013)  
Parking Standards and Design (2011)

Other relevant documents:

Conservation Area Appraisal – Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area

## **6. Appraisal**

6.1. The main considerations are:

- Principle of Development
- Heritage and Design
- Landscaping and Public Realm
- Affordable Housing
- Unit Mix, Housing Quality and Future Residents Amenity
- Transport
- Sustainability
- S106 Legal Agreement

### ***Principle of Development***

- 6.2. Local Plan Policy H1 sets out the pressing need for housing in Reading and the surrounding area. It goes on to identify that the appropriate use of previously developed land is an important way of meeting the housing needs in Reading.
- 6.3. The site forms part of an allocated in the Local Plan as CR12c. The allocation includes land to the north and west of the site, and as a whole has an indicative potential of between 180 and 260 dwellings. The allocation suggests potential for community uses, small scale retail and leisure uses, and suggests that there is an opportunity to enhance the Oxford Road frontage. It identifies that inappropriate building scale at the fringes of the site would be unacceptable due to the surrounding heritage assets and low-rise residential uses.
- 6.4. The office building on the site is currently underoccupied, and permission has previously been granted for the conversion of the site from office to residential (ref. 190419). The office building itself does not positively contribute to the character of the area, and does not enhance the setting of the Listed Buildings or the Conservation Area. Its loss would be considered acceptable. The loss of the office use is considered acceptable on this site given the amount of higher quality office space in central Reading, and the allocation of the site for primarily a residential use.
- 6.5. The proposals would bring an underused, site back into use. The provision of housing would reflect the Local Plan allocation and it would contribute significantly towards the indicative housing potential of the site allocated site as a whole. However, the allocation does suggest that other uses, such as retail, leisure and community uses should be considered on the allocated site. This proposal is purely residential in nature, and would not bring forward any of these further uses. Although the allocation suggests that these uses should be considered, it is not a requirement. This site is the largest portion of the allocation, and so some element of other uses could be expected. However, in order to meet the indicative residential potential of the site, which is significant at 180-260 units, it is considered that the application site providing a large number of units towards this potential would be acceptable in principle without provision of the other uses.
- 6.6. Given the application does not seek to provide these uses, the proposal should meet other aspects of the allocation, in particular enhancing the Oxford Road frontage and surrounding public realm. The proposal would represent a significant improvement to the public realm on Oxford Road, in particular the introduction of active residential frontages,

gardens, planting and the entrance square in place of the existing unattractive car park and paved area. This provision is discussed in further detail below.

- 6.7. The site is well located within the Central Area, and is highly accessible. It constitutes an underused brownfield site in Central Reading. The allocation in the Local Plan identifies it as an appropriate location for residential development, and therefore the proposal is considered acceptable in principle, and the redevelopment of an allocated site to provide a significant proportion of housing can be considered a significant benefit of the proposals, supported by policies CC1, CR12 and H1.
- 6.8. The following sections will assess the different aspects of the scheme.

### ***Design and Heritage***

- 6.9. Policy EN1 of the Local Plan seeks to protect heritage assets and their settings and where possible, enhance them. Proposals which affect heritage assets and their settings should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm identified requires clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits. Policies EN3 and EN6 of the Local Plan seek to ensure that the special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas is conserved and enhanced. Development proposals in conservation areas should make a positive contribution to the historic townscape and be sensitive to the historic context.
- 6.10. Policy CC7 states that “all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area”. The NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments “are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities)”.
- 6.11. The site is adjacent to numerous heritage assets. Number 104 Oxford Road (the Royal Meteorological Society) is on the corner of Oxford Road and Eaton Place, and the site wraps around the northern and western boundaries of the Grade II Listed Building.. The Historic England Listing identifies the property as an Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century Georgian detached house (now occupied by the Royal Meteorological Society as an office), with particular focus on the symmetrical front elevation, noting the materials, cornices, windows, portico and door details. The building is a fine example of the Georgian Revival style, with a pitched roof with matching chimney stacks, a regular window pattern with a prominent portico. The Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area lies to the south and west of the site. The Grade II Listed Butler Public House is directly to the north of the site, on the other side of Eaton Place, beyond a vacant site which is the subject of an appeal (201104) for redevelopment into a five storey residential building. To the west along Oxford Road is the Holy Trinity Church, which is Grade II Listed. The designated heritage assets can be seen on the below map (stars indicate Listed Buildings, the purple shaded area indicates the Conservation Area):



- 6.12. The site is within the West Site Major Opportunity Area (Policy CR12), which also indicates that an increased amount of change and development is expected. However, proposals should ensure that they respect the immediate character and appearance of the area as well as preserving and where possible enhancing heritage assets.
- 6.13. The scheme is laid out with one L-shaped building wrapping around the southern and eastern sides of the site (comprising Building 1 and Building 2), with another building (Building 3) set in the north western corner of the site, separated by a communal courtyard. All of the buildings use brick as their primary material.
- 6.14. Building 1 uses a different primary brick to the other two buildings, which is darker compared to that use on Buildings 2 and 3. The darker brick is proposed to provide a link to other similar bricks on the southern side of Oxford Road, without using a material too similar to that of the immediately adjacent 104 Oxford Road, allowing the Listed Building to retain its prominence. Building 1 would have white glazed bricks at ground and top floor level to delineate the different parts of the building and highlight the entrance point. It would have a regular form, continuing the building line of Oxford Road, stepping up in height towards the centre of the façade. A regular fenestration pattern, without balconies, with windows recessed into the façade provides a link to fenestration arrangements along Oxford Road, in particular at number 104.
- 6.15. Building 2 adjoins Building 1 to the rear of 104 Oxford Road, at three storeys in height directly adjacent to the Listed Building. It then proceeds to step up in height from three storeys to six at the northern side of the site. The stepped form breaks up the massing of the building, and the differing fenestration pattern between ground and upper floors combined with defensible green space at ground floor provides interest on this façade. On the northern elevation, Building 2 uses recessed sections, fenestration and an active reception frontage at ground floor level to address Eaton Place.
- 6.16. Building 3 sits separately in the north western corner of the site, and is the tallest element of the scheme at seven storeys. It includes a set in on the western side at the top floor level, which breaks up the bulk of the building. The use of recesses, balconies and a balanced fenestration pattern would reflect the similar design of Building 2, and provide continuity through the centre of the site.
- 6.17. The overall design of the scheme draws inspiration from the character of the Conservation Area, providing a link between the historic aspects of Oxford Road to the more modern development to the east. The Oxford Road façade would use materials, proportions and fenestration patterns of the existing historic buildings in this part of Oxford Road to create a proposal which would fit in with the prevailing character of the area. Although the proposal draws from the historic fabric, it does not mirror it, but responds effectively, allowing the proposed building to co-exist with the adjacent heritage assets without becoming overbearing.



- 6.18. The proposed building would address the street scene through the creation of a strong entrance point on Oxford Road, adjacent to 104 Oxford Road, and a clear, simple design on the southern elevation. The ground floor and upper floors are clearly delineated through the use of different materials, set backs and the use of different fenestration patterns. The use of brick, window recesses and detailing would integrate the design into the historic environment. The scale would be appropriate, stepping away from sensitive heritage assets to the south towards the centre of the site, and would read well within the context of the lower rise Oxford Road and the taller elements of the Chatham Street development to the east. The proposals would successfully address the transition between the larger scale development to the east and the smaller scale built form along Oxford Road and the western part of Chatham Street.
- 6.19. The entrance square adjacent to 104 Oxford Road provides a more open aspect adjacent to the Listed Building, as well as an element of active frontage on this part of Oxford Road, especially where the entrance and communal internal areas are identified by the use of a lighter glazed brick, with larger glazed openings. This is continued along the Oxford Road frontage, removing the existing visitor's car parking area, which currently creates an unappealing frontage, with the proposed main pedestrian entrance, communal space and residential gardens/terraces providing a more attractive, open and active frontage on Oxford Road.
- 6.20. The layout of the site, includes a central courtyard which opens onto Eaton Place to the north, separating Buildings 1 and 2 from Building 3. The inclusion of the courtyard alongside the separate buildings breaks up the scale of the proposals and creates an attractive space in the centre of the scheme for use by residents. Pedestrian access to the site is from Oxford Road through the newly created square into a reception/communal area, as well as access from Eaton Place to the north. On the northern side of the site, residential reception areas wrap around the corners of Buildings 2 and 3 to ensure a level of passive surveillance over Eaton Place, which improves the security of this part of the site.
- 6.21. The proposed scheme would represent a significant improvement to the immediate public realm along Oxford Road, replacing an unattractive car parking area and poorly laid out frontage with an open square, planting and active residential and reception frontages. The enhancement of the Oxford Road frontage is specifically noted as an opportunity in the site allocation, and the proposal would achieve a significant improvement to the public realm and Oxford Road in this location, which is considered to be a significant benefit of the scheme.

### Heritage

- 6.22. Development in a sensitive historic context will always result in a change to the setting of heritage assets, especially when a site is allocated for development within a Major Opportunity Area, where significant change is expected. Development should seek to ensure that heritage assets are preserved and where possible enhanced. On this site, the existing government building is considered to detract from the setting of 104 Oxford Road and views into and out of the Conservation Area, and so its loss would be considered acceptable.
- 6.23. The proposal would sit in the context of a number of heritage assets, as identified above. It is directly behind and to the west of the Grade II Listed 104 Oxford Road and adjacent to the Conservation Area. The proposals would introduce a larger space immediately adjacent to the Listed Building to the west, creating a larger entrance square to the proposed building. The proposals would also bring forward the building line further to the west, and introduce built form behind the Listed Building, which would be visible when viewing 104 Oxford Road from Oxford Road within the Conservation Area.



- 6.24. The proposal is in close proximity to 104 Oxford Road, being sited directly to the north and west, is readily visible from within the Conservation Area to the south and east, as well as being visible in the setting of the Holy Trinity Church in longer views from the west. Building 1 fronts onto Oxford Road, and would be of a size, scale and design that would reflect the neighbouring properties on Oxford Road. The fenestration pattern, ground floor design and changes in height across the frontage would ensure that this aspect of the scheme would sit well in its context. The increased set off immediately adjacent to 104 Oxford Road would emphasise the importance of the heritage asset, and provide space around the Listed Building, allowing the proposal and the heritage asset to sit independently and ensure that views of the Listed Building are retained.
- 6.25. As Building 1 adjoins Building 2, the height steps up behind 104 Oxford Road from three to six storeys at the northernmost part of the site. Given the proximity of the proposed building, this increase in scale would result in some harm to the setting of the Listed Building at 104 Oxford Road and the Conservation Area, at a low level of less than substantial harm.



- 6.26. The proposals would also be visible behind the Grade II Listed Butler Public House when viewed from Chatham Street. The rear elevations of Buildings 2 and 3 would be most visible, at 6 and 7 storeys in height respectively. There would be a set off between the Listed Building and the application site across Eaton Place itself and the vacant site to the south of the Butler. Given the scale of the proposed buildings, and the cumulative impact when read alongside the taller buildings at Chatham Place to the east, the

proposal would result in harm to the setting of the Butler at a moderate level of less than substantial harm.



- 6.27. Berkshire Archaeology were consulted as part of the application, who identified the site as of archaeological interest. A condition for site investigation has been recommended.
- 6.28. The proposal would result in harm to nearby heritage assets at low to moderate level of less than substantial harm due to the position and scale of the proposed buildings. The design of the scheme would reflect the character and appearance of the immediate vicinity, with particular success on the Oxford Road frontage, which also benefits from a significantly improved public realm treatment compared to the existing arrangement. In townscape terms, the scale and design of the proposal would be transitional in nature, between the modern development at Chatham Place to the east and the smaller scale, more traditional development to the west and south. The site is within a Major Opportunity Area, and significant change in the built form is therefore expected. The proposal does result in some harm to the heritage assets as outlined above, however, the detailed design and public realm improvements on Oxford Road would represent a significant benefit, and these positions will be weighed in the planning balance.

#### Security

- 6.29. Local Plan policy CC7 requires new development to create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion.
- 6.30. The proposal would introduce residential use into this part of Oxford Road/Eaton Place, which improves natural surveillance both on the southern frontage and to Eaton Place at the rear. The nature of the proposal, as a Build to Rent scheme, also provides an on-site management team, with multiple staffed reception areas which improve this passive surveillance. These reception areas would face out onto Oxford Road, the courtyard within the scheme and onto Eaton Place at the northern side of the site. This arrangement is considered to be acceptable, and would lead to a secure and safe environment for both future residents as well as improving the safety of the surrounding environment. The proposal is considered acceptable in this regard.

#### ***Landscaping and Public Realm***

- 6.31. Policy EN12 seeks to protect existing green space, ensure that there would be no net loss of biodiversity, and where possible to demonstrate that there is a net gain for biodiversity. Policy EN14 seeks to protect existing trees and improve Reading's vegetation cover. The site at present has an extensive area of hardstanding and 20 small trees which are located on the Oxford Road frontage, between the existing L-shaped building and the car park in the north western part of the site, on the eastern boundary and on the northern boundary of the site.

- 6.32. Policy CC7 requires new development to create high quality public spaces, accessible and safe environments whilst providing value to the public realm. Policy CR12 seeks development in this area to provide improved areas of open space, and in particular on this site to enhance the Oxford Road frontage, particularly with tree planting.
- 6.33. The proposal would significantly improve the public realm on the northern side of Oxford Road, which is currently characterised by an unattractive blank façade and car parking area with minimal planting. The proposal would introduce a well designed building frontage, create an entrance square with active communal uses at the eastern end of the site. The proposals would also introduce private terraces serving ground floor flats, which would represent an appropriate addition to the street scene. In addition to on-site tree planting, the applicant has agreed to contribute to the provision of eight additional street trees on the Oxford Road frontage, which would be secured through the legal agreement.
- 6.34. The site is within a low canopy cover ward and within a 'treed corridor' as per the 2021 Tree Strategy. The proposals would result in twenty trees being removed to facilitate development. One tree, a Plane on the northern edge of the site, is a good specimen and would be lost. However, 25 trees are proposed to be planted as part of the proposals, on the Oxford Road frontage, within the courtyard and on the northern side between Building 3 and Eaton Place. The proposed trees would represent a significantly improved diversity (11 different species, 8 different genus and 5 different families), which would be predominantly native and wildlife friendly. The trees would be well located, including providing an increased level of tree provision on the Oxford Road frontage. Further contributions towards providing additional street trees on Oxford Road would result in a further uplift in canopy cover and would represent a significant benefit of the scheme.
- 6.35. The proposals would include green roofs with appropriate soil depths, acceptable tree pits and a well landscaped central square. Conditions have been recommended to secure landscaping details. This results in a net gain of five trees, plus additional street trees, which is positive, and improves the public realm on the Oxford Road frontage. None of the trees which would be removed have significant value in terms of their age or appearance.
- 6.36. The proposal is accompanied by an ecological survey which demonstrates that there would be no impact on existing species at the site. The applicant has submitted a Biodiversity Enhancement Scheme alongside the application. This includes details of landscape planting, green roofs, bat boxes, bird boxes and bee bricks. This would represent a biodiversity uplift on site, especially given the low level of existing biodiversity provision. Conditions are recommended to ensure that the proposals would provide landscaping details and the installation of swift bricks is carried out to ensure an adequate biodiversity net gain on site.
- 6.37. Planting along the Oxford Road frontage is appropriate, the provision of sedum roofs and tree pits would also assist Sustainable Drainage and the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) is satisfied with the drainage scheme. The proposed landscaping is acceptable.

### ***Affordable Housing***

- 6.38. Local Plan Policy H3 requires development to make an appropriate contribution towards affordable housing to meet the needs of Reading Borough. For this Major development, 30% of the total dwellings are expected to be provided as affordable housing, with the preference being on site provision. If proposals present an offer which falls short of the policy, then the developer should clearly demonstrate the circumstances justifying a lower contribution through an open-book viability assessment.
- 6.39. The proposal would provide twelve affordable housing units on site: 5 one bedroom units, 6 two bedroom units and 1 three bedroom unit, which equates to 10% of the total units. All of the units would be rented at no more than the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) cap, and would be spread within the scheme. This amount of affordable housing falls short of the policy requirement, and so the applicants have submitted a viability assessment to justify the shortfall.

- 6.40. The viability assessment has been reviewed by the RBC Valuation team, and found to be robust. The viability assessment demonstrates that the scheme is unviable, and supports the applicant's position that no affordable housing can be provided on site. Following this assessment, officers have secured the above offer through negotiations with the applicant.
- 6.41. The applicant has further agreed to a Deferred Payment Mechanism, which would ensure that in the future, if any positive gains were made in viability due to lower construction costs and/or an expected uplift in values, the developer would pay an enhanced further contribution. The 'cap' for these contributions would be equivalent to the Gross Development Value derived maximum contribution for the development which could mean that the equivalent financial contribution of 30% affordable housing could be achieved. The review will be undertaken following substantial completion of the 90<sup>th</sup> unit, with payment required (if necessary) prior to substantial completion of the 100<sup>th</sup> unit.
- 6.42. The Housing Development Team were consulted as part of the application and although the proposal cannot provide policy compliant levels of affordable housing, agree that the mix and tenure of the proposed affordable units to be provided on site is acceptable.
- 6.43. Given the above package, the proposal is considered to be acceptable and complies with policies H3, CC9 and the Affordable Housing SPD, however, given it is below policy compliance, the provision of this level of affordable housing cannot be considered a significant benefit of the scheme.

***Unit Mix, Housing Quality and Future Residents' Amenity***

- 6.44. Local Plan Policy H2 states that wherever possible, residential development should contribute towards meeting the needs for the mix of housing set out in figure 4.6 of the Local Plan, in particular for family homes.
- 6.45. Local Plan Policy CR6 states that proposals for residential development within the central area should provide a mix of different unit sizes. As a guide, it suggests that a maximum of 40% of units should be one bedroom or studios with a minimum of 5% of units as at least three bedroom units.
- 6.46. Local Plan Policy H5 states that new build housing will need to comply with the nationally prescribed space standards. Policy H10 requires dwellings to be provide with functional private or communal open space where possible. Homes should also have adequate natural light, outlook and privacy.

***Mix***

- 6.47. The proposal would provide 120 units with the following mix:

<b>Type</b>	<b>Market</b>	<b>Affordable</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Studio flat</b>	10	0	10 (8%)
<b>1 bedroom flat</b>	49	5	54 (45%)
<b>2 bedroom flat</b>	44	6	50 (42%)
<b>3 bedroom flat</b>	5	1	6 (5%)
<b>Total</b>	108	12	120 00%)

- 6.48. The proposal would provide a mix of unit sizes that would not meet the suggested mix within Policy CR6, as 53% of units would be studios or one bedroom units. The proposals would, however, meet the minimum of 5% of units as three bedroom or greater.
- 6.49. The applicant has demonstrated that the scheme would be unviable even if 100% of the scheme was private, with no affordable housing contribution provided. Amending the unit mix to meet the 40% policy guide in CR6 would result in a reduction of units, which

therefore would render the scheme increasingly unviable. Furthermore, the applicant has also indicated that 120 units is the minimum viable number of units for a Build to Rent scheme such as this to function effectively, both financially and in site management terms. Although the proposals would overprovide one bedroom units, failing to meet the 40% guide set out in Policy CR6, the applicant has satisfactorily demonstrated that the proposals are already unviable, and changes to the mix would result in further reductions in value which would have further impacts on the viability of the scheme. The mix is therefore considered by officers as being supportable, but cannot be considered a positive aspect of the proposals, despite the welcome provision of policy compliant family sized units.

#### Residential quality and amenity

- 6.50. Each new unit would meet or exceed the relevant internal space standards as set out in Policy H5. 14 unit would be single aspect, north facing units, equating to 11.6% of units. Ideally this type of unit is minimised, and although some are proposed, it would be a low proportion of the units on a constrained site. The applicant has also submitted a daylight/sunlight assessment, which was assessed by an independent consultant on RBC's behalf. The assessment identified that some rooms would fall slightly below the relevant standards, but when taken as a whole, the development would comply with the relevant standards with regards daylight and sunlight provision for the proposed units, especially given the urban nature of the area.
- 6.51. The proposal is characterised by an L-shaped building (Building 1 and 2) which wraps around the southern and eastern sides of the site, with Building 3 separated by an L-shaped central courtyard. Please see the below ground floor site plan:



- 6.52. The proposals would have a separation distance of 13.5m between Buildings 1 and 2 and Building 3. At upper floors, windows and balconies are offset to ensure that there is minimal direct overlooking between units, and around half of the affected units are dual aspect, with affected windows being secondary. Whilst there is no policy requirement for separation distances between units within a development, 13.5m is not considered to represent an adequate separation distance between units. Although the urban nature of the site, the offsetting at upper floors and many affected units being dual aspect offer some mitigation, it is considered that the separation distances would fail to provide adequate levels of privacy, especially within a new-build development such as this. Ground floor units facing into the courtyard, onto Eaton Place and Oxford Road would have private amenity space and/or a landscaped buffer to ensure that the levels of privacy would be acceptable for these units.

- 6.53. The proposal would provide a landscaped communal amenity area between the buildings, as well as communal roof terraces at upper levels. Furthermore, the proposals would provide private amenity space for many of the units through balconies and terraces. Many of the units have private balconies which face into the courtyard or onto Eaton Place, which represents an acceptable arrangement. No balconies face onto Oxford Road, other than private garden terraces at ground floor, which also serve as defensible space from the public realm.

#### Noise

- 6.54. The site is on Oxford Road, which is a busy arterial route into and out of Reading Town Centre and is within an Air Quality Management Area. As such, the proposal would include adequate mitigation, with regard to air quality, through the implementation of an appropriate ventilation arrangement. Conditions are recommended to ensure that this is secured.
- 6.55. The application site is in close proximity to a number of noise generating uses, namely the Face Bar directly to the north west and the Butler Public House to the north, which both host live music, as well as the busy Oxford Road. The northwestern corner of Building 3 is within 15m of the external wall of the Face Bar, and the northern edge of Building 2 is within 27m of the rear boundary of the Butler. There is a pending appeal for the redevelopment of the site at 10 Eaton Place, directly between the application site and the Butler (ref. 201104), which was refused for the potential noise impacts on future residents, amongst other reasons.
- 6.56. The proposal would be in close proximity to these established night time uses which generate significant levels of noise, and so the proposal represents an agent of change. Given this, the responsibility for mitigating these noise impacts on new development lies with the developer.
- 6.57. A noise report has been submitted with the application. The proposal demonstrates adequate noise mitigation to ensure that there would be no impact on future residents from external noise. Further mitigation including upgraded ventilation and glazing to meet the required NR20 noise rating, which is acceptable for music noise, is proposed to ensure that there would be no adverse impact as a result of noise from the Face Bar and the Butler. Conditions securing these are recommended.
- 6.58. The proposals would not provide an appropriate unit mix, although this has been robustly justified through a viability statement, and so although this meets the requirements of Local Plan Policy CR6, it cannot be considered a benefit of the proposals. The units would, however, be of an appropriate size and would benefit from appropriate levels of private and communal amenity space.. Some units, particularly those facing into the courtyard, would have sub-optimal privacy and outlook, however this is partially mitigated through window offsetting and acknowledging the urban nature of the site. Overall and on balance in terms of the quality of the accommodation for residents, your officers advise that the proposals would provide an acceptable level of accommodation for future residents.

#### **Transport**

- 6.59. Policy TR1 of the Local Plan requires developments to promote and improve sustainable transport. Policy TR3 states that consideration will be given to the effect of a new development on safety, congestion and the environment. Proposals should provide acceptable access to the site and ensure that there would not be a detrimental impact on the functioning and safety of the transport network. Policy TR5 states that development should provide car parking and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport.
- 6.60. The site is located within Zone 2 of the Parking SPD's parking zones, the primary core area, but on the periphery of the central core area. This area is well served by rail and bus links and also contains the largest proportion of public car parking spaces. The site

is fronts onto the A329 Oxford Road which is the main transport corridor between central Reading and the west. The A329 Oxford Road has parking restrictions preventing on-street parking and forms part of the Red Route 'no stopping' corridor.

- 6.61. Pedestrian access into the site would be provided via a dedicated pedestrian reception entrance on Oxford Road. Secondary pedestrian accesses will also be provided on Eaton Place. The scheme would have three reception areas, one facing onto Oxford Road and two onto Eaton Place to the north. These would provide an element of passive surveillance both within the scheme but also onto Eaton Place and Oxford Road, which is considered a benefit of the scheme. The proposals will remove the existing forecourt parking provided at the frontage of the Site on Oxford Road to deliver a large area of public realm. Vehicular access into the Site will be facilitated from Eaton Place in a similar manner to the existing site.
- 6.62. The Proposed Ground Floor Plan illustrates a potential future pedestrian route to the west of the site. The applicant has agreed to allow adoption of this area to ensure that the highway authority retains control of the road to provide this.
- 6.63. A total of 14 parking spaces will be provided within the site accessed via Eaton Place. Of the parking spaces provided, 6 will be disabled parking spaces allocated for residents only, and the remaining 8 parking spaces will be allocated for use by the Royal Meteorological Society (104 Oxford Road) only, who retain the right to 8 parking spaces on-site. While parking provision is below RBC's required standards, the extensive parking restrictions surrounding the site and the accessible nature of the location ensure that the provision is acceptable. Parking permits for future residents will be restricted by condition to ensure that no overspill car parking takes place.
- 6.64. All residential parking spaces would be provided with active electric vehicle charging facilities to promote electric car use where private car travel is necessary, with the spaces allocated to the Royal Meteorological Society delivered with passive charging facilities to enable future EV charging capabilities.
- 6.65. The Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD require the provision of 0.5 spaces cycle parking spaces per apartment. Cycle parking at the Site will be located at ground floor level within separate stores in each residential building. A total of 71 cycle parking spaces will be provided for residents across the various cycle stores, in the form of both Sheffield stands (including accessible cycle parking spaces) and two-tier stands. All of the cycle storage would be at ground floor level, with one store in each building, accessible from either within the courtyard or the access route on the west of the site. Short-stay cycle parking will be provided on-site within the public realm delivered as part of the development, with 4 spaces provided (2 Sheffield stands externally adjacent to the Oxford Road residential entrance. Cycle storage provision is considered acceptable and would be secured by condition.
- 6.66. Residential refuse collections will take place from Eaton Place. Waste stores are proposed within each of the residential buildings at ground floor, with a larger waste store located in Building 3, which will act as a consolidated waste holding area for the entire Site. Prior to collection, the Site Management Team will transport all waste bins to the holding area. This would be secured by condition.
- 6.67. All deliveries for the development will be undertaken from Eaton Place, where a loading bay will be created within the newly provided access area to accommodate all servicing vehicles up to 7.5t box vans. This is considered acceptable.
- 6.68. In accordance with the Council's current Parking Standards and Design SPD, for developments of more than 10 residential units in Zones 1 and 2, developers will be required to provide or support a car club, or demonstrate that the development will have access to and the use of a car club on a nearby site or on street facility. The Applicant is willing to deliver a car club bay and provide car club membership to each residential unit, which will be marketed to residents as part of the Travel Plan.

- 6.69. It should be noted that a car club has been secured for the neighbouring site at 115 Chatham Street (under app ref 210349). As part of 115 Chatham Street application, the Highway Authority have agreed to an on carriageway car club bay being located on Eaton Place. This provision may be extended as part of this proposal when the demand is established.
- 6.70. A Construction Method Statement will be required given the significant remodelling of the site proposed within this application and will be secured by condition.
- 6.71. Overall, the proposals would represent an appropriate development in transport terms, and it would comply with the Local Plan.

### ***Sustainability***

- 6.72. Local Plan Policy H5 'Standards for New Housing' seeks that all new-build housing is built to high design standards. In particular, new housing should adhere to, water efficiency standards in excess of the Building Regulations, zero carbon homes standards (for major schemes), and provide at least 5% of dwellings as wheelchair user units. Policy CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction) and Policy CC3 (Adaption to Climate Change) seeks that development proposals incorporate measures which take account of climate change.
- 6.73. An energy and sustainability statement was submitted as part of the application. This demonstrates that the proposal would not meet zero carbon targets, but would achieve a 64% carbon reduction over Part L through higher fabric standards and air source heat pumps.
- 6.74. The Council's Sustainable Design and Construction SPD states in paragraph 3.11 that "in achieving Zero Carbon Homes for major residential developments, the preference is that new build residential of ten or more dwellings will achieve a true carbon neutral development on-site. If this is not achievable, it must achieve a minimum of 35% improvement in regulated emissions over the Target Emissions Rate in the 2013 Building Regulations, plus a Section 106 contribution of £1,800 per remaining tonne towards carbon offsetting within the Borough (calculated as £60/tonne over a 30 year period.)"
- 6.75. The proposals would not meet the net zero requirement given the nature of the scheme replacing an existing building and the arrangements of the proposed buildings. The scheme would reach 64% improvement against Part L, which is 29% above the minimum policy requirement. Residual emissions would be offset with a carbon offset payment of £1,800 per tonne, in accordance with Policy H5 and the SPD. This contribution would be £55,440 and would be secured through the legal agreement.
- 6.76. Policy EN18 requires all major developments to incorporate Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) with runoff rates aiming to reflect greenfield conditions and, in any case, must be no greater than the existing conditions of the site. The applicant has submitted a Surface Water Drainage Strategy which demonstrates that the proposed drainage rate would be a reduction when compared against the Brownfield runoff rate and provides a pipes' network to the attenuation tank. As such, the proposal complies with Policy EN18 and is considered acceptable subject to the conditions recommended above.

### ***Legal Agreement***

- 6.77. The overarching infrastructure Policy CC9 (Securing Infrastructure) allows for necessary contributions to be secured to ensure that the impacts of a scheme are properly mitigated. The following obligations would be sought and as set out in the recommendation above:
- To secure affordable housing on site consisting of twelve units (10% provision) on site, to be 5 one bedroom units, 6 two bedroom units and 1 three bedroom unit. These would all be capped at LHA levels (inclusive of service charges). Criteria for letting and income threshold requirements will be required to be confirmed as part of the legal agreement. Although the offer is below the policy requirements, this has been confirmed as the maximum offer achievable through assessing the viability information submitted. The Housing Development Team have confirmed that the

offer is acceptable.

- A Deferred Payment Mechanism would be secured in accordance with the Affordable Housing SPD 2021. This would secure a review following substantial completion of the 90<sup>th</sup> unit, with payment being made in full prior to occupation of the 100<sup>th</sup> dwelling. This would ensure that a maximum amount of affordable housing is provided as part of the proposals.
- Zero carbon offset financial contribution of £55,440, to compensate for the failure to meet net zero targets.
- Employment, Skills and Training and Construction financial contribution of £25,007.50 required due to the scale of the development to allow for the provision of appropriate training opportunities for local residents.
- Off site public realm improvement contribution – to secure tree planting and public realm improvements in the immediate vicinity of the site. Total sum to be £10,000
- Highways improvements
  - o Car club – to provide access to an accredited car club and membership to every residential unit on site
  - o An annual review to establish whether an additional on-street bay would be required and to fund this if needed
  - o Contribution of £7,500 towards Traffic Regulation Order to provide the car club bay and on street parking restrictions
  - o S38 agreement to secure pedestrian/cycle links to the west of the site
  - o S278 agreement to provide the car club bay on Eaton Place

### ***Other Matters***

#### ***Neighbour Amenity***

- 6.78. Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) of the Reading Borough Local Plan states that development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties.
- 6.79. The closest residential use is at Bond House, directly to the west of the site. There are other residential uses on the south side of Oxford Road and to the east above shops. Due to the position of the proposals, distance to other residential uses and orientation of neighbouring residential units, it is not considered that the proposal would have any impact on neighbour's living conditions.
- 6.80. The application site forms part of a wider site allocation, and so consideration must be given to future development on other parts of the allocated site. The proposal would be positioned away from other parts of the allocation, to the north and north west. The position of the proposal, set away from the northern boundary of the site across Eaton Place, not would ensure that the proposal would not prejudice future development on other parts of the allocated site. Given the proposals would redevelop this part of the allocated site whilst ensuring that the remainder of the site could come forwards for development, this is considered a net benefit of the proposals.

## **7. Equality implications**

- 7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular application

## **8. Conclusion & planning balance**

8.1. As with all applications considered by the Local Planning Authority, the application is required to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, as per Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

8.2. The proposals are for the redevelopment of a brownfield site allocated for primarily residential use in a Major Opportunity Area. The scheme would provide 120 dwellings in a scheme which would meet much of the indicative residential potential for the wider allocated site. The scheme would redevelop the site in a manner which would allow for other development sites nearby to come forward satisfactorily, which is integral to ensuring that piecemeal development does not stymie the delivery of the wider allocated site. The proposals would represent a high quality design which integrates with the immediate surroundings well, providing a significant public realm improvement which benefits the wider area.

8.3. The scale of the proposals would result in a low to moderate level of harm to the Conservation Area and several Listed Buildings, namely 104 Oxford Road and the Butler Public House, although the design of the proposals on the frontage of Oxford Road would integrate well and mitigate this harm somewhat. The proposals would fail to provide policy compliant levels of Affordable Housing or a policy compliant unit mix, although the applicant has adequately justified this under provision through extensive viability information, which shows the scheme as unviable. The scheme would generally provide acceptable living accommodation, although some units would have reduced overlooking distances across the courtyard area.

8.4. Officers have considered the benefits and harm identified above, and weighed them in the planning balance. It is considered that the redevelopment benefits of the proposal, in particular the provision of housing, a high quality design, extensive public realm improvements and the layout of the proposal to facilitate future development within the allocated site would outweigh the resultant harm.

8.5. It is considered that officers have applied a suitable planning balance when reaching this conclusion. As such, this application is recommended for Approval subject to completion of a legal agreement and relevant conditions.